

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO THE SOUTH SHORE ESTUARY RESERVE COUNCIL

CAC Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2022

7:00-9:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present:

Maureen Dolan Murphy, Citizens Campaign for the Environment/Chair CAC
Jeremy Campbell, NYS DOS/Reserve Coordinator
Alexa Annunziata, Peconic Bay Keeper
Judi Bird, League of Women Voters Brookhaven
George Costa, Trout Unlimited/Art Flick Chapter
Alli DePerte, Atlantic Marine Conservation Society (AMSeas)
Rob DiGiovanni, AMSeas
Kathleen Fallon, Co-Chair TAC/NY Sea Grant
Rich Groh, Town of Brookhaven
Artie Kopelman, Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island (CRESLI)
Lou Siegel, NYS Marine Education Association
Robyn Silvestri, Save the Great South Bay

1. Introductions

M. Dolan Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Introductions were made.

2. Presentation: Rich Groh, Town of Babylon SSER Projects

R. Groh presented on recent efforts made by Town of Babylon. In fall 2021, the Town of Babylon working with Save the Great South Bay installed the Bandolier Bandit litter trap to protect the Carlls River in the Town of Babylon. The litter trap was funded/donated by Save the Great South Bay and Stormwater Systems. It was deployed on a tributary of the Carlls River and captures all floatables moving downstream to the river which eventually flows into the Great South Bay. Save the Great South Bay volunteers monitor the trap monthly and with assistance from Town staff, clean the trap. Additional litter traps will be installed in the Town of Babylon in the future. Approximately several thousand pounds of debris have been collected so far. Most of the debris accumulates during storm events via storm drain systems and runoff.

Question: is there a possibility to install additional upstream devices to help alleviate the debris issue?

Answer: Other options have already been implemented. It is important to be strategic about where to install devices and the educational component to not have litter should be our first defense.

The recently completed Carll's River Stormwater Treatment wetland project was funded by Governor's office of Storm Recovery with a total cost of \$3,000,000. The project goal was to help improve water

quality and bolster resiliency for the area while mitigating downstream flooding. A litter trap will be installed at this location in the future.

Another completed project connected Babylon town hall park to sewers and helped with stormwater management. Previously, the park bathrooms had been on cesspools but no longer. The grant was for \$320,000 with a 50% match through the Suffolk County water quality improvement grant. This project improves water quality for Santapogue Creek. This project also involved completion of a pollution prevention plan for the Babylon highway yard. Two water quality grants were obtained to upgrade drainage in the highway yard, phase 1 is complete and phase 2 is currently underway. Harmful algae blooms were found at the pond within Babylon Town Hall Park, this helped spur the projects.

The Carll's River Wetland Restoration project was accomplished in partnership with Suffolk County. A Suffolk County water quality improvement grant was obtained for \$120,000 with a 50% match. The Town used Posillico Wash Plant to recycle (low level concentration) contaminated material, over 2,400 tons was sent to the facility with additional material recycled through the Town's Solid Waste System.

Town of Babylon installed three SAV signs on Babylon Town beaches that highlight the benefits of eelgrass and identify the threats. This sign was created by Town of Babylon and DOS/SSER staff with input from the TAC. If interested in printing and installing this sign, please reach out to the SSER office.

The Town rain barrel program has been very successful. Town makes the rain barrels and distributes to residents. Town of Babylon holds an annual poster contest sponsored by Winters Brothers Waste Systems to raise awareness of the problem of plastic litter entering our waterways. This year there was 1 winner and 4 second place contestants.

3. **AMSeas Seal Tagging project**

R. DiGiovanni thanked all partners that contribute to monitoring the health and movements of pinnipeds in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean project. Project funding is provided by multiple sources. Harbor and gray seals are the most prevalent seal species. Questions to address:

- What species are here?
- How are they using the habitat on a local and regional scale?
- What is the overall health of these animals?
- What threats are the animals facing throughout the region?
- How do strandings of these animals relate to the wild populations of these species?

Samples collected include blood samples, whiskers, nasal, ocular, rectal and oral swabs, blubber biopsy, fur, and genetic material. Both natural, like age or disease, and human induced, like vessel strikes, are examined. A map of marine mammal and sea turtle strandings from 2017 to 2021 was examined. It was also noted that in Maine there is an unusual harbor and gray seal mortality event.

The harbor and gray seal health assessment area of interest ranges from Maine to Virginia. This is to cover the species range, once tagged the seals may travel the coast. This project aims to help understand how seals move around and how they use east coast bay systems/New York Bight. Some tags have already been deployed and another 30 to be used this year. Animals are captured, measurements and samples taken, and then tagged before being released. Animals are not harmed

during this process. Types of tags include flipper, satellite, and acoustic. Tags will eventually fall off since they are attached to fur. Data collected includes locations, time spent in an area, temperatures, time spent hauled out, and dive data (time at depth and dive depth).

Eight sea turtles were released at Jones Beach this year. Future projects include a sea turtle health assessment, post rehabilitation seal and sea turtle monitoring, marine mammal and sea turtle first responder training, emergency response for marine mammals and sea turtles training drill, and expansion of survey and sampling efforts.

4. SSER 30th Anniversary Celebration/ SSER Stewardship Award/ Jeremy Campbell, South Shore Estuary Reserve Office

J. Campbell announced the adoption of the updated SSER CMP and the upcoming press event which will be hosted by Town of Babylon at the Cedar Beach Marina. He invited all CAC members to attend the event. It was also noted that 2023 will be the 30th Anniversary of the creation of the South Shore Estuary Reserve. He asked the CAC to create a subcommittee to come up with ideas to celebrate the anniversary.

M. Murphy suggested including TAC and Council members. This subcommittee can help galvanize the public and coordinate messages to promote the SSER. CAC members supported this effort. For anyone interested in joining the subcommittee, email M. Murphy.

A. DePerte asked about the status of Estuary Day. J. Campbell replied that the estuary programs worked together and in 2022 had an Estuary month that had a map with a variety of stewardship events around Long Island. R. Silvestri volunteered to use Save the Great South Bay clean up events as a way to cross promote. Several members volunteered: R. Groh, R. Silvestri, L. Siegel, A. Kopelman, R. DiGiovanni J. Campbell also requested resuming the Stewardship Award. J. Bird volunteered to be a part of the Stewardship subcommittee.

J. Campbell announced the next Council meeting will be October 25, 2022, and the location will be forthcoming. The Community Science webinar series will have another installment on Monday next week, for more information visit <https://seatuck.org/community-science-webinars/>. After the press event the link to the updated CMP will be distributed. Additionally, Jeremy informed that the SSER office is engaged with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County to develop a seagrass management and restoration project. The project will develop a model for restoration within the estuary and is looking at several parameters including temperature, light, and sediment. The contract has not yet been executed but will have a 5-year contract period.

5. Public Comment/Announcements

George Costa –A day in the life of the Carmans River is 9/23 and a day in the life of the Forge River is 10/14. The fish passage at the lower impoundment of the Carmans River is progressing and should be complete by the end of this year. Mud Creek County Park has a fish passage being installed. Construction for the Sewer project in Mastic has begun which help water quality for the Forge River.

Lou Siegel – On October 6th Melissa Griffiths-Parrott will be speaking about the A Day in the Life program at the NYSMEA lecture series.

Kathleen Fallon – The next TAC meeting will be October 4th, 2022.

The meeting adjourned.